

**This Week in Congress**

*October 26, 2009*

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress."

**Speaking for the Forgotten U.S. Taxpayer**

This week, I spoke to the House of Representatives about the recent news from Neil Barofsky, the special inspector general managing the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), who said that recouping the billions of taxpayer dollars spent to bailout AIG and the automakers General Motors and Chrysler is "far from certain." Barofsky also noted the \$50 billion that has been set aside to help struggling homeowners lower their mortgage payments will "yield no direct return." Taxpayers' borrowed dollars are being spent with no accountability.

I am one of only 17 of 435 members of the House of Representatives to vote against each of the government bailouts and stimulus packages that have resulted in a dramatic increase in federal spending. Wasteful government spending must be stopped to prevent us from bankrupting our country and our future generations. [Click here](#) to view my speech.

### **Working to Increase Transparency and Accountability**

I sponsored legislation this week introduced by Kansas Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins that would change House rules to provide for transparency in the committee amendment process. This resolution, H.Res. 835, would require House committees to post the actual text of adopted bills and amendments online within 24 hours after adopting or considering a measure. Recently, Democratic leaders in the Senate made more than 70 substantive changes to the text of the health care reform bill passed by the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) Committee after the committee had approved the bill. These changes were made without a vote and without the knowledge of all the committee's members. This is not the right way to legislate. Americans deserve to know what their representatives are voting on, and they deserve the assurance that their business will be conducted in a deliberate and transparent manner.

### **October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month**

This week, I spoke to the House of Representatives to recognize October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Every year, there are more than four million new incidents of domestic violence in the U.S. and of those, more than 100,000 cases are in Kansas. I again spoke about Jana Lynn Mackey, a young law student from Hays who lost her life to domestic violence last year. In her short life, she advocated for others and worked as a devoted civic servant. To honor her, Jana's parents started the Eleven Hundred Torches campaign to encourage and inspire citizens to volunteer their time to make a difference for others. This month, the Eleven Hundred Torches Campaign logged its 1,100th volunteer. Whether it is donating time or helping with a local domestic violence center, we all can do more to end domestic violence.

I encouraged my colleagues to seek out a center, shelter or organization to get engaged in domestic violence prevention. In addition, I asked Congress to support domestic violence programs. While we have made gains to provide support to victims of domestic violence, there is still much work to be done. [Click here](#) to watch my speech.

### **Supporting Tax Incentives for Commercial Real Estate**

I asked the House's tax writing committee this week to extend two property tax incentives important to the commercial real estate industry in Kansas. Unless Congress acts, both incentives will expire at the end of the year and investment in commercial property will be reduced. The first provision would maintain the 15-year depreciation period for leasehold improvements, which are alterations a building owner makes to improve a rental space for a tenant. The second tax provision would continue a special bonus, or accelerated depreciation for leasehold improvements for the first year. I encouraged the Ways and Means Committee to include these provisions in tax legislation expected to be drafted soon.

### **Flu Shot Shortages in Kansas**

Communities across Kansas are currently facing shortages of the seasonal flu vaccine. I have received reports that the companies responsible for producing this year's supply of the vaccine have encountered delays in producing and shipping the vaccine and that some Kansas health care providers are receiving fewer doses of the vaccine than they ordered. I am concerned with these delays and cutbacks. Kansas health care providers have already been forced to turn away patients and county health offices across the state have had to cancel flu shot clinics due to supply shortages.

I recently expressed my concerns to these companies and requested a status update. I recognize the challenges the companies face due to the rush to produce millions of doses of the new H1N1 flu vaccine and the increased demand for flu shots this year, but I want to be sure they are aware of the situation on the ground in Kansas. [Click here](#) to read more about this issue.

### **Hosting Tele-Town Hall Meeting from D.C.**

This week, I conducted a Tele-Town Hall meeting from Washington, D.C. A Tele-Town Hall meeting is a unique way for me to stay in touch with Kansans while I am in our nation's capital. With the use of this technology, a single phone call connects me to up to 25,000 people who have chosen to participate in the call. It is similar to an interactive radio talk show as participants are able to ask me questions.

During this Tele-Town Hall, I took questions from Kansans about their concerns with the current health care reform legislation. I also took calls about Cap and Trade legislation, the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility and support for U.S. troops. I asked callers during the call if they agreed or disagreed that President Obama should deploy significantly more troops to Afghanistan as recommended by General Stanley McChrystal. [Click here to vote in this survey.](#)

### **Visiting Wamego City Hospital**

I traveled to Pottawatomie County on Monday to tour the Wamego City Hospital. Recently, I worked with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to preserve the hospital's Critical Access Hospital (CAH) designation. Due to a CMS classification change for Manhattan and the surrounding area, the hospital was set to lose its CAH designation, which would have meant significant loss of Medicare reimbursement for the facility. After meeting with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to discuss the issue and working with CMS staff, I was pleased to learn that CMS exercised its discretion to allow the hospital to maintain its current CAH designation. Access to health care is essential for rural communities and CAH designation helps many Kansas hospitals serve a medically diverse population across a wide area.

During my visit, the hospital staff and I discussed the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act, a law concerning access to emergency medical care at hospital emergency departments. We also discussed how current health reform proposals could affect the number of medical students wanting to become doctors and nurses.

Thank you to Shannon Flach, the hospital's interim administrator, for inviting me on the tour. [Click here](#) for a photo.

### **In the Office**

Pam Shaw and Kathryn Ellerbeck of Kansas City, Dennis Cooley of Topeka, J. Bryan Wohlwend of Hutchinson and Chris Steege of Lenexa were in with the American Academy of Pediatrics to discuss children's health care issues. Brian Truchon, Special Agent in charge of the FBI's Kansas City Division, was in to update me on the FBI's operations in our state. Dr. Richard Warner of Overland Park was in with the Coalition to Protect Patients' Rights to visit about health system reform.

Michael McGrew of Lawrence was in with McGrew Real Estate to talk about the housing market in Kansas and legislation to assist its recovery. Steve Knox of Topeka was in with the Easter Seals Capper Foundation to express support for affordable quality health care for individuals with disabilities and their families. Katy Belot of Topeka was in with the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services to provide an update on the department's efforts to protect children and promote adult self-sufficiency in Kansas.

Scott Chapman and Peter Hodges of Manhattan and Paul Kerens of Leawood were in with Physician Hospitals of America to talk about health care reform. John Gillcrist of Overland Park and Jill Carlson of Junction City each stopped by my office to visit.

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office to receive a tour of the United States Capitol, including Dean and Sherra Brigman of Hutchinson and Roger and Phyllis Ellis of Wichita.

Very truly yours,

Jerry